

A program of the
Tennessee Department of Education
School Safety and Learning Support Programs
administered by
Volunteer Tennessee



Youth Reaching Youth



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Aspire was created in 1999 to recognize the ability of young people to serve as change agents in their communities. Aspire works with teams of 8-24 students and 2 adult sponsors from high schools across the state. Sponsors form their teams by selecting student members who mirror the diversity in the school they represent. Aspire staff then work with the teams and sponsors to provide training in leadership and program development using principles of service-learning. The teams are charged with meeting monthly throughout the school year to design and implement projects that will improve their school climate and/or change the current norms around alcohol, drug use and violence. Teams choose projects as diverse as starting peer mediation teams, initiating peer education programs with middle-schoolers and creating positive alternatives to alcohol and other drug use. At the end of the school year teams present their accomplishments, reflect on their service and learning, and plan for the future.

★ **Aspire Youth Leadership FAQs**

Q: What does the Aspire calendar look like for the year?

A: Applications are due August 1st. Aspire has a state-wide training for all Aspire teams in Nashville October 2nd-5th. Teams return to school prepared to assess their school climate and implement a service-learning project to address issues in their school and community. Teams will meet on a monthly basis. Throughout the school year Aspire staff will do site visits at each school to provide support. In the spring teams design and host an end of year celebration to present and celebrate their service.

Q: How are student teams selected?

A: Teams are required to select student members who mirror the diversity in the school they represent and should possess some demonstrated leadership ability. Current team input is encouraged in the selection of new team members. New teams are asked to select 8 sophomores the first year and add 8 more each year.



Q: What is required of me as a sponsor and what type of support do I receive?

A: Sponsors are required to attend all Aspire trainings with their team. Sponsors are to host at least one meeting per month with their team and provide support and guidance to the team. Sponsors receive training at the state-wide training in the fall and are also offered a professional development opportunity in service-learning at no cost with top national trainers and curriculum valued at \$500.

Q: What are some of the projects teams have done in the past?

A: Teams have created alternatives to drug and alcohol use, educated their school about the dangers of meth, created peer mentoring programs and prevention programs for middle schools, and addressed gang violence.

Aspire is a program of The Tennessee Department of Education, administered by Volunteer Tennessee. Staff at Aspire trainings include staff from the Department of Education School Safety and Learning Support Programs, Volunteer Tennessee, TN AmeriCorps members, AmeriCorps Alumni and Miss Tennessee.

★ Aspire Youth Leadership

Aspire and Service-Learning

Aspire is built on a research-based teaching methodology called *service-learning*, a form of experiential education that can be used to enhance student learning while meeting real community needs. It is an authorized activity under the federal Title IV Safe & Drug Free Schools and Communities law in Section 4115.b.2.E.xix.

In the Aspire program, students **learn** leadership, communication, problem-solving and teamwork skills and apply those skills through **service** to foster a safe and drug-free learning environment that supports academic achievement.



Aspire program benefits:

- ♦ **Schools and Communities** benefit from a structured way to effectively engage students to improve school climate for learning.
- ♦ **Sponsors** benefit because state staff provide high quality basic training for student teams and organize a great year-end demonstration and celebration. Aspire leaders also receive an easy-to-use program handbook with monthly meeting agendas and activities all laid out. Leaders can also participate in additional professional development in support of the program.
- ♦ **Aspire team students** benefit from a high quality program that results in development of leadership, communication, problem-solving and teamwork skills.
- ♦ **All students and teachers in the school** benefit from the improved school climate generated by the work of the Aspire team.

Improving high schools effectiveness:

Aspire addresses several strategies of the National Association of High School Principals "Breaking Ranks II" high school reform report.

"Core Area 2. Personalizing the School Environment.

If high achievement for all students is the goal of reform, personalization is the key. Although some students might be able to make it through four years of high school despite the lack of any personal connections, **all students require a supportive environment. Creating that environment is essential to bringing learning to fruition.**"

"Core Area 3. Making Learning Personal.

Rec. 23. The high school will promote service programs and student activities as integral to an education, providing opportunities for all students that support extend learning."



"Core Area 6. Distributed Leadership.

Institute structural leadership changes that allow for meaningful involvement in decision-making by students...."

For more information on high school reform, see www.principals.org.



Application 2008-2009

School/Organization Name _____

County _____

Lead Sponsor Information (Will receive all mailings. Please print clearly and provide all information. Please provide summer address, as it will be necessary to contact you over the summer. ***Sponsors are also required to have weekly e-mail access.**)

Full Name: _____

Job Title: _____

Primary Address: _____

City: _____ ZIP: _____

Home Phone: (____) _____ Work Phone: (____) _____

Fax: (____) _____ *Email: _____

Summer Address: _____

City: _____ ZIP: _____

Co-Sponsor Information (each team must have co-sponsor)

Full Name: _____

Job Title: _____

Primary Address: _____

City: _____ ZIP: _____

Home Phone: (____) _____ Work Phone: (____) _____

Fax: (____) _____ Email: _____

Has either sponsor participated in Lions-Quest service-learning training? ____Yes ____ No



ASPIRE PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Ensure that ALL guidelines can be met before sending in application!

- Any Tennessee high school or community-based nonprofit organization may apply to sponsor an Aspire team.
- All team members & sponsors should be committed to a drug-free lifestyle.
- Teams should consist of diverse student representation and members should possess some demonstrated leadership ability.
- Teams must meet at least once monthly and create a research-based Action Plan with measurable outcomes related to the goals of the Aspire program.
- Sponsors and two student leaders are required to have weekly e-mail access.
- Team sponsors are required to communicate with Aspire staff on a monthly basis, through e-mail and monthly reports.
- Team sponsors are required to submit student evaluations at the beginning of the program and at the end of the program year.
- Teams and team participants need to make a minimum one year commitment to the program.
- Sponsors will be offered professional development opportunities in service-learning at no cost with top national trainers and curriculum valued at \$500. Workshop completion also meets employment standards for Course Code 9395 "Success Skills through Service-Learning."
- Ensure that funding for trainings and other events is secured or a funding plan has been developed before submitting application. Expect to pay for travel costs to one state-wide fall training (4 days/ 3 nights) in Middle Tennessee, as well as limited event registration fees to cover training and materials. Registration fees are estimated at \$100 for the fall training. Check with your school system's Safe and Drug Free Schools and/or Safe Schools Coordinator for potential sponsorship.
- **Each team must submit a letter of support from their principal with their application.**
- **Each RETURNING team must submit a letter of support from one of their Aspire students.** (Students are also encouraged to assist in the writing of the application.)

Application Due Dates

Returning teams: May 30th, 2008

New teams: August 1st, 2008



Aspire Team Application Questions

On separate, typewritten pages, please answer the following questions clearly and concisely. A state selection committee will review your application for completeness, quality and past performance of returning teams.

1. **Why.** Is this your first year applying for the Aspire program or have you had an Aspire team before? If 1st year, briefly explain your interest in starting an Aspire team at your school. If you are a returning team, how will your Aspire team continue to develop and improve its initiatives to create a safer, more positive school and/or community?
2. **What.** Will your Aspire team be an extension of an existing program or a new effort? If an extension, please describe the group.
3. **Who.** Tell us about the sponsor and co-sponsor's experience and interest. How will you recruit your Aspire team to assure diverse youth representation? How will youth be involved in the selection process?
4. **How.** What Safe & Drug Free or other prevention programs currently exist in your school or community for high school youth (i.e. STARS, SAFE, Youth Alive and Free, etc) How will the Aspire program complement these services? How will Aspire be different so as not to involve the same youth and/or offer the same services?
5. **Accomplishments.** For returning teams only. Why do you wish to sponsor an Aspire team again this year? Clearly explain how the Aspire program has been beneficial as it relates to changing youth attitudes regarding the use of drugs, alcohol and violence and/or how your Aspire team has created more safe and disciplined learning environments.
6. **Funding.** How much will it cost your team (estimated) to travel to fall event (The Fall event will be in Nashville)? How much will the total cost of the program be: Travel + \$100 per student? How do you plan on raising these travel funds plus the \$100 per student? (Your application will NOT be considered if this question is left unanswered.)
7. **Letter of Support.** Make sure to include your letter of support from your principal.
8. **Returning Teams.** Submit a letter of support from at least one Aspire student.

Certification. We have read and understand the description of Aspire, and we will do our best to meet the expectations outlined. Please consider our Aspire application for the 2008-2009 school year.

Signatures:

Lead Sponsor _____

Sponsor _____

Principal _____